

number as not only is the Nation going through an economic downturn, but they've been seeing that the amount of Federal background checks done in order to purchase firearms broke record levels with more than 14 million occurring last year alone. That's a 55 percent increase in firearms purchases in just 4 years, but it has not even led remotely close to the doom and gloom havoc being peddled by anti-gun advocates.

Criminologist Gary Kleck analyzed National Crime Victimization Surveys and concluded that robbery and assault victims who used a gun to resist were less likely to be attacked or to suffer an injury than those who used any other methods of self-protection or those who did not resist at all. Unfortunately, in my home State of Illinois, Governor Quinn took it upon himself in May to determine what's best for Illinois. Rather than listening to the voice of the Illinois constituency, Quinn made desperate 11th-hour phone calls to sway Illinois Democrats to his side and block vital legislation to allow concealed carry in Illinois. He knows better than 49 other States, and he knows better than top law enforcement organizations like the Illinois Association of Chiefs of Police, the Illinois Sheriffs Association, the Chicago Police Lieutenants Association, and the Chicago Police Sergeants Association.

Quinn doesn't get it, but 49 other States do and so do I, which is why I am a proud cosponsor of H.R. 822, the National Right-to-Carry Reciprocity Act of 2011, which was introduced by my colleague, Representative CLIFF STEARNS of Florida. This bill allows any person with a State-issued concealed carry to carry in any other State. Therefore, for the 49 States that issue concealed carry permits, their State laws would apply.

In Illinois, I refuse to deny visitors the right to carry weapons when they are authorized to do so. We must follow the example set by every other State in this Nation and allow law-abiding citizens to own and bear arms. We must restore, defend and preserve this constitutional right at all government levels.

REDUCING THE FEDERAL DEFICIT

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Washington (Mr. McDERMOTT) for 5 minutes.

Mr. McDERMOTT. Madam Speaker, over the past several weeks, we've been debating ways to reduce the Federal deficit.

Republicans have said that everything is on the table and that nothing is sacred, but that just isn't true. The Republicans refuse to cut tax giveaways to the wealthiest special interests in this country. And when it comes to discussing the merits of continuing our efforts in Afghanistan, the Republicans clamor to defend it despite our fiscal mess.

I want to remind my Republican friends, the situation we are in now is not new. Throughout history, from Rome to the Ottoman Empire to the Soviet Union, the overextension of military and protracted struggles in foreign countries have crippled empires.

Some historians have credited Ronald Reagan for the Soviet Union's collapse, but what really bankrupted the Soviet Union was its wars. Just like us, they paid a crushing price both financially and morally in Afghanistan. Overextending geopolitically comes at a cost over time, and any nation that thinks otherwise is setting itself up to repeat the mistakes of the past.

As of today, the United States has spent more than 2½ times the percentage of GDP on Afghanistan than the Soviet Union spent of its GDP during its 9-year war in Afghanistan. Public polls are clear: Americans know the cost of the war in Afghanistan is unsustainable and want us to withdraw as soon as possible.

And when it comes to cutting back on support for the neediest Americans, we can't seem to face the urgent reality that the money that we spend abroad needs to be spent here at home. The financial facts tell the story. Taxpayers in my district in Seattle have spent \$1.1 billion for the Afghanistan war to date. Think about that: one city, \$1.1 billion. For the same amount of money, we could provide health care for 700,000 children from low-income families, or put 125,000 kids in Head Start, or health care for 150,000 more veterans.

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Imagine how different it would be if States like Wisconsin, which faces a \$3.6 billion budget deficit, did not have to bear the cost of the war in Afghanistan.

So the question before us is simple: What is our priority? Fighting a war with no end or investing in the American people? The answer lies in what kind of country we are, what legacy we leave behind to our children and our grandchildren, and transcending political decisions toward a common commitment to make America strong again.

America will cease to be a world power if we fail to support the domestic foundations of our Nation. Yet the House does not even blink as it approved a \$650 billion defense budget last Friday. While the Republicans were cutting any spending that helps people, they didn't so much as flinch as they threw hundreds of billions of dollars into the bottomless pit of the defense budget.

We need to stop seeing the world through the lens of constant threat and foster a sense of the common good and shared responsibility. That, not our military footprint, is what will advance our interests in the world and make us confident again.

In a national poll conducted last year, 47 percent of Americans rated

China's economy as the strongest economy in the world. Our crumbling roads reflect our crumbling self-confidence. Our national prosperity is vital to our national security, and that is why I believe getting out of Afghanistan must be the center of reducing our deficit. Anything short of that would ignore the fiscal reality and the will of the American people to end the Afghanistan war.

We have a choice before us: Continue the war and continue downhill, or stop the war and start up the hill to regain what we've lost over the last few years.

NEW TAXES KILL JOBS

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentleman from South Carolina (Mr. WILSON) for 5 minutes.

Mr. WILSON of South Carolina. Madam Speaker, before I begin, I would like to join with my colleague from Illinois, Congressman ADAM KINZINGER, in congratulating the people of Wisconsin on passing a concealed weapons bill. I think they'll find, as we have found in South Carolina, that having a concealed carry permit—we call it Law Abiding Citizen's Self-Defense Act—that the consequence of this a number of years ago now has been a reduction in crime. In fact, many of the people who—as I was a floor leader in the State Senate to propose the concealed carry law, so many of the people who opposed it, and they opposed it thinking that they were doing correctly, have subsequently told me that they really are thrilled that now it has passed, that it, indeed, has promoted a reduction in crime in our State. And I know the same will be true in Wisconsin and possibly one day in Illinois.

Madam Speaker, time is running out for the American people. With just weeks to go before our country defaults on its debts, liberals in Congress continue to roadblock any progress on real spending cuts. The American people want to see spending reforms. The administration can cut other Federal spending before it allows a default on the U.S. debt. Americans understand that the Federal Government is burdening future generations with debt by borrowing over 40 cents of every dollar it spends. Senior citizens are at risk with the value of the dollar in question.

Americans want to see meaningful spending reform. Liberals want to play political games. Republicans have been trying to lead on spending reform. From the moment this new Congress has been in session, House Republicans have passed numerous bills that cut spending, curb government growth, and encourage job growth for American families. The latest news on the debt limit talks shows yet again how out of touch this current administration is with the American people. Cut the spending. Do not impose new taxes which will kill jobs which need to be developed by small businesses.